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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses great shock and sadness at death of Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India.

- Secretary-General appeals for further efforts to end suffering of Afghan people who, he says, have become "forgotten".

- Concern about alleged human rights violations in Kuwait during Iraqi occupation expressed by speakers in Economic and Social Council's Social Committee.

- Anti-Apartheid Committee expresses deep concern over deteriorating physical condition of South African political prisoners on hunger strike.

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Following news of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar sent a telegram of condolences to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi in which he expressed great shock and sadness.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said in the telegram that Mr. Gandhi was a remarkable political leader, whose impact was felt not only in his own country but around the world. He praised Mr. Gandhi's deep understanding of international relations, and his commitment to the United Nations which, he said, was a source of great encouragement to him.

It was all the more tragic, the Secretary-General said, that Rajiv Gandhi's passing took place at a time when India, once again, was giving evidence of its longstanding devotion to the democratic process.

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In a statement issued today, Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar said reports of active hostilities in Afghanistan over the last few weeks had reconfirmed his concern that further efforts were needed to bring about an end to the suffering of the Afghan population.

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At a time when other developments seemed to be attracting the attention of the world, the Afghans had become a forgotten people, he said. He urged that advantage be taken of the growing determination of the international community to assist in the alleviation of human suffering so as to end the Afghan problem.

The Secretary-General said he was encouraged by the views expressed by all parties in the just-concluded round of consultations undertaken on his behalf by his Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan. The talks, which concluded yesterday, were held with all segments of the Afghan people, including political leaders of opposition groups and resistance commanders, as well as prominent Afghans currently residing outside the region and the Government.

Outlining the basis for a political settlement, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stressed the necessity of preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan. A transition period was needed, he said, details of which had to be worked out and agreed upon through an intra-Afghan dialogue, leading to the establishment of a broad-based Government.

The Secretary-General said he intended to continue his discussions with all concerned in order to encourage and facilitate the working out of the details of a negotiated settlement.

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Concern about alleged human rights violations in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation was expressed by several speakers as the Economic and Social Council's Social Committee continued its consideration of human rights questions yesterday.

In reply, the representative of Iraq said those delegations criticizing his country had themselves violated the human rights of the Iraqi people through bombardment and economic blockade.

The politicization of human rights continued to prevent authentic international cooperation and a constructive approach to human rights questions, speakers said. The connection between democracy, sustainable development and human rights was stressed. The fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance as well as the question of human rights and the environment were also discussed.

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The Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), said today that the Committee was deeply concerned about the deteriorating physical condition of the South African political prisoners on hunger strike for the last three weeks to demand their immediate release.

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In addition, he said, the Committee was greatly disturbed by reports of inhumane treatment of those political prisoners who had been hospitalized as a result of their hunger strike. Such reports should, in the view of the Special Committee, be impartially investigated, and action to redress any abuses should be taken promptly.

The Special Committee called on the international community to demand that the South African authorities comply with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, which called for the release of all political prisoners.

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